

# ARTISTS AND WRITERS: **Sculpture by Michael de Lisio**



SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY

BOOKS

This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Artists and Writers: Sculpture by Michael de Lisio*, at the Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, June 24 to September 20, 1998.

The exhibition was organized by the Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Alston Conley curator.

This publication was supported by Boston College with a generous contribution from Edward Cabot

Copyright © 1998 by the Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art,  
Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number 98-66274  
ISBN 0-9640153-9-0

Copyedited by Heather Fryer  
Exhibition coordinated by Kerry Leonard

Designed by Boston College Office of Publications and Print Marketing,  
Katya Popova, Designer, David Williams, Art Director

Typeset in Swift & Futura

Printed by Champagne Lafayette Communications Inc.

Photography: John D. Schiff nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; Ed Peterson nos. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16  
Front cover: John D. Schiff. Back cover: John D. Schiff

Front cover:  
*Shakespeare and Company, 1970-72*

Bronze, edition of 5  
Oak base 30 x 48 inches

Ten figures 7 to 11 inches high, includes James Joyce, Paul Valéry, William Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, André Gide, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier

Back cover:  
*Gertrude Stein and Basket, 1967*  
Bronze cast, edition of 5, 12 x 9 1/4 inches

ARTISTS AND WRITERS:

**Sculpture by Michael de Lisio**

Alston Conley

**June 24 to September 20, 1998**

McMULLEN MUSEUM OF ART, BOSTON COLLEGE

# FORWARD

Michael de Lisio is an exceptional self-taught artist from Manhattan. He began this vocation in mid-life, choosing as his subjects writers and artists, several of whom were his friends. It is particularly fitting for his sculpture to be shown at Boston College, and in particular at the McMullen Museum, which has had a tradition of exploring the connection among literature and art and casting works, be they Indonesian shields or contemporary works by Irish Women artists, in their broadest cultural context. Concurrently, letters between Michael de Lisio and various of the writers represented, including Janet Flanner and W. H. Auden, as well as their autographed books, memorabilia, and photographs are shown at the Burns Library at Boston College. We are grateful to Robert O'Neill, head librarian, and John Atteberry, senior reference librarian, who organized the display.

The McMullen Museum is pleased to present this retrospective. It began with my visit to Mr. de Lisio, which had been arranged by fine arts consultant, alumnus and chairman of our collections advisory committee Thomas Knapp '73. Mr. de Lisio first showed me his fine collection of nineteenth- and twentieth-century drawings, then engaged me with stories of his life in New York's literary world and then, only reluctantly—but dazzling me nonetheless—pointed out his own sculptures. On my second visit, I was accompanied by Professor Franco Mormando, S.J. who was equally enchanted. When, some months later, our curator, Stoney Conley spent time with Mr. de Lisio, he immediately conceived of the parameters of the current exhibition and set about persuading Mr. de Lisio to lend his works to Boston College, to unearth the relevant correspondences with writers and artists and to talk about his recollections of his subjects. The results are chronicled here. We are indebted, indeed, to Mr.

Conley for his keen eye, artistic intuition and dedication to this project. Heather Fryer, our graduate assistant, transcribed the interview and edited the catalogue. Kerry Leonard, our exhibitions and publications coordinator, organized various aspects of the exhibition and supervised the publication of this catalogue. Our administrator, Helen Swartz, tended to the many organizational details surrounding the exhibition.

As always, we are grateful to the administration of Boston College for its support of the exhibition. We also thank Edward Cabot, a member of our collections advisory committee, for underwriting a large portion of this catalogue. Finally, our greatest debt of gratitude is due Michael de Lisio for lending these works from his private collection. His talent and enthusiasm and his willingness to share his life experiences have inspired us all.

— Nancy Netzer

# Michael de Lisio: Artists & Writers

Michael de Lisio is an unusual “outsider” artist: he is a self-taught sculptor, in a cosmopolitan city, with a sophisticated aesthetic. In late 1965 de Lisio found himself increasingly disenchanted with his career as a film publicist. That year, while visiting the studio of artist friend Danny Maloney, he was strongly encouraged to “make something.”<sup>1</sup> At the age of fifty-five, de Lisio sculpted his first head, a Modiglianesque self-portrait in wax. Always an avid reader, he was also a poet who was published in the *New Yorker*, where he got “poetry lessons”<sup>2</sup> in the form of useful criticism from editor E. B. White. The writers he most admired became his subject matter, unifying his love of literature with his new interest in sculpture. Heads became portraits, the first a semi-abstract relief of Marcel Proust. As clay replaced wax, “I got myself a studio, because I was serious,”<sup>3</sup> which motivated him to cast the terra cotta figures in bronze, which were then colored with various patinas.

Without ever having taken lessons, he reinvented technique as he needed, developing an individual style that appears in a series of busts which includes Edgar Allen Poe, Marianne Moore, Gertrude Stein, Vladimir Nabokov, W. H. Auden and Aubrey Beardsley, and his standing figures of Robert Louis Stevenson and Ezra Pound—all completed within two years. Developing a semi-naturalistic but individualized sense of form, the figures are intimate and oddly monumental, having an unusual sense of scale for sculptures so small in size.

A great fan of snapshots, de Lisio worked largely from photographs gathered from books, magazines and newspapers. He intended to capture both the life and what he terms “the poetry in the work” of the writers (and later the artists) that he sculpted—an ambitious project for a self-described “primitive”<sup>4</sup> in technique. Following his “private need”<sup>5</sup> to express form

and technical naïveté, he has sidestepped the weight of history and artistic tradition, moving his work beyond caricature.

De Lisio and his lifelong partner, the editor and literary critic Irving Drutman, shared a love of art and an impressive collection, including drawings by Modigliani and Max Beerbohm, a watercolor by Charles Demuth, and the sculpture of Elie Nadelman. At the time of Drutman’s death in 1978, de Lisio had been sculpting for twelve years. His passing marks the beginning of a new phase in de Lisio’s artistic practice, in which he translates his self-image and his domestic world, so infused with the presence of art and artists, into a series of sculptures of great artists. Renderings of Picasso and Lautrec preceded the Stieglitz group, which includes John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, Arthur Dove and Georgia O’Keeffe. In these later works a severity, or “expressive deformity”<sup>6</sup> emerges, encroaching on the primitive naturalism of his earlier work.

In the two decades when the dominant art movements were conceptual or minimal, large scale and abstract, de Lisio was an anomaly. He made sculpture that was unschooled, figurative and small-scale about a personal pantheon of artists and writers that shaped the century, and he is all the more unique for it.

<sup>1</sup> Alston Conley, Interview with Michael de Lisio, (unpublished typescript, February 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Martha Saxton, “The Biographer,” *Connoisseur* 215 (September 1985): 140-48.

<sup>3</sup> Conley, Interview with Michael de Lisio.

<sup>4</sup> Michael de Lisio, *Michael di Liseo (sic): Sculptures* (New York: Zabriskie Gallery, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Sanford Schwartz, *Michael de Lisio* (New York: Brooke Alexander Inc., 1978).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

no. 5

*Henry James*

**1969**

Bronze cast, edition of 5

16 1/4 x 9 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches



**Objects** in the **Exhibition**

no. 1

*Gertrude Stein and Basket*

**1967**

Bronze cast, edition of 5

12 x 9 1/4 inches





no. 2

*Janet Flanner at a Costume Party (ca. 1929, Paris)*

**1967**

Bronze, edition of 5

10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 4 inches

On exhibition in the Fine Print Room, Burns Library, with books, letters and memorabilia



no. 3

*W. H. Auden (ca. 1947)*

**1968**

Bronze, edition of 5

10 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches

On exhibition in the Fine Print Room, Burns Library, with books, letters and memorabilia



no. 4

*Oscar Wilde in America (ca. 1882)*

**1969**

Bronze cast, edition of 5

17 x 9 x 7 inches



no. 7

*Sarah Caldwell*

**1975**

Bronze, edition of 5

9 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 8 x 7 inches

*on the following page:*

no. 6

*Shakespeare and Company*

**1970-72**

Bronze, edition of 5

Oak base 30 x 48 inches

Ten figures 7 to 11 inches high, includes James Joyce, Paul Valéry, William Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, André Gide, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier







SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY



BOOKS

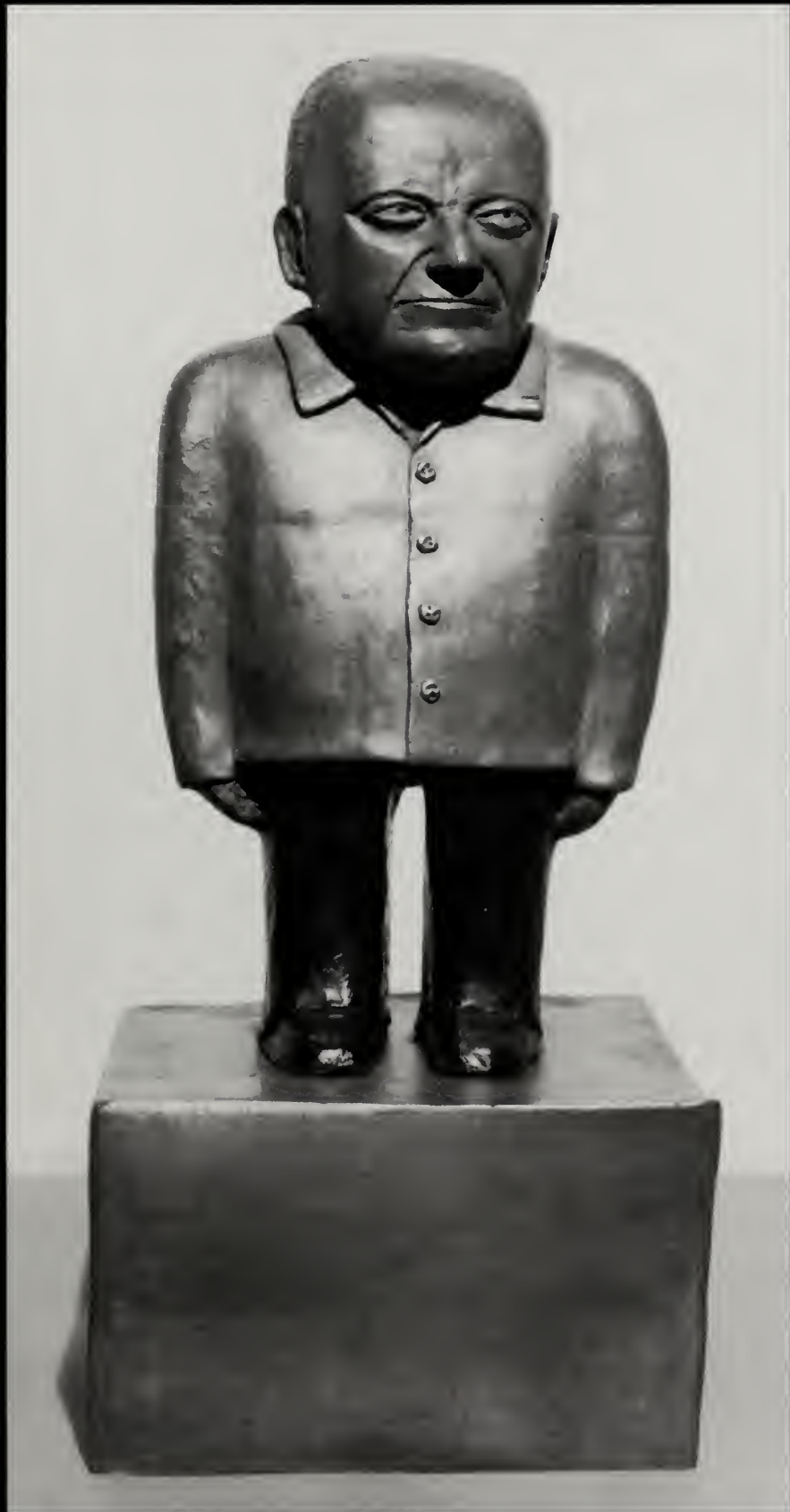
no. 9

*Virgil Thomson*

**1980**

Bronze, edition of 6

13 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches



no. 15

*Evelyn Waugh*

**1982**

Bronze, edition of 8

13 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches



no. 8

*Pablo Picasso (ca. 1935)*

**1977**

Bronze, edition of 5

28 x 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 7 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches





no. 10

*Alfred Stieglitz*

**1981**

Bronze, edition of 8

8 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches



no. 11

*John Marin*

**1981**

Bronze, edition of 6

12 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 x 3 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches



no. 12

*Marsden Hartley*

**1981**

Bronze, edition of 6

15 1/2 x 7 x 6 1/4 inches



no. 13

*Charles Demuth*

**1981**

Bronze, edition of 6

13 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches





no. 14

*Arthur Dove*

**1982**

Bronze, edition of 6

11 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches



no. 16

*Georgia O'Keeffe*

**1983**

Bronze, edition of 6

13 1/2 x 6 3/4 x 5 3/8 inches





# An interview with Michael de Lisio

## by Alston Conley

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 1998

AC: You said you started in sculpture by making pieces about literary figures and the people who were important to you. And amongst those earliest figures were two of people that you knew, the Janet Flanner and the W. H. Auden. Was it a different experience, working on the sculptures of friends as opposed to those of people you never met?

**MD: I found doing the ones I knew a little more difficult. [It was easier] if I was left alone with enough photographs, I would get as many as I could in profile, full face—a good selection.**

AC: How much of your reading the work and your admiration for their writing would play into your sense of their character?

**MD: My reading was a very important influence on my sculpture. In fact, I chose the people because of my reading. I wanted to get into the sculpture, if possible, a likeness and the feeling of what the life was and the work. If I could get both the life and the work and the likeness...I didn't realize at the time that it was a very ambitious program.**

AC: That's the advantage of not having classes.

**MD: That's true, because I didn't know what I couldn't do until I did what I couldn't do. When one of my larger figures like the Ezra Pound started to tumble on me, I had to change. In that case I changed not only the way it could stand, I changed the whole image. It became a completely other sculpture. So it was a wonderful accident.**

AC: And accidents can be very helpful in the creative process.

**MD: Yes.**

AC: You wrote poetry since you were a young man, and published occasionally, and then by the '60s you were making sculpture about the writers that you had loved. Did being a poet influence all of those choices?

**MD: I think being a poet was an extraordinarily important part of my growing, because I never, never stopped writing poetry. I'm not talking about the quality now; I think some of them are good. But it's something I always**

did. I think that if you have a creative nature, that it can come out in many different forms. I think the poetry also invades a number of the figures.

AC: By 1967 you had already done a whole string of writers, including Robert Louis Stevenson, Janet Flanner, Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, and the Oscar Wilde in 1969.

MD: Oscar Wilde has always been an idol of mine ever since I can remember. I have a very good book on Wilde, a biography. And it has great photographs in it. I didn't want to do him in the image that people have become used to knowing—the desiccated Oscar Wilde, who was falling apart after the famous trial in England. I wanted to do him in a different way. So I was reading about his going to America, almost like the young adventurer going to see what that country was like. So when I saw that figure, I decided that I would do it in that period.

AC: He has a very proud stance.

MD: Yes, well he was a proud man. He couldn't help knowing that he was probably the most brilliant man of his generation. I mean, who else was there, other than Shaw?

AC: The big project that kept your focus in the early '70s was *Shakespeare and Company*. How did you come to make that group?

MD: Well, *Shakespeare and Company* came about because I had met Ben Sonnenberg a year or two before. He was a collector of art. And Ben must have seen one of my sculptures somewhere and decided he liked it and wanted to meet the person who did them. Ben came and he bought the terra cotta of the Ezra Pound. Then he became a friend and I invited him to one of our parties. Ben came in [and] he said, "I hereby commission you to do *Shakespeare and Company*!" [Ben had seen my] sculpture of Verlaine and Rimbaud [which] was influenced by a big painting [by Henry Fantin-Latour] that they had at the *Jeu de Pomme* in Paris with lots of artists and literary lights of the day in a big panorama. On the left hand side, alone, were Verlaine and Rimbaud, looking as though they had probably just had a quarrel. And I thought, "I've got to do that." I did each figure seated separately. Then did the table separately, and added my only still life on the table.<sup>1</sup> I had them looking almost as though they just had a quarrel. When I sought to put the Rimbaud figure underneath the table one of the table legs was in the way. What to do! Could I, at my age, cheat? I simply took that table leg off, and nobody to this day has noticed that there's no table leg. But it was the idea of doing two people at a table that had, I think, inspired Ben Sonnenberg to envision my being able to do *Shakespeare and Company*.

I had heard of *Shakespeare and Company*, and the moment he said it I knew. It was so wonderful to have an idea like that, a project. What I thought I would do with *Shakespeare and Company* is to do them, one at a time, and be a little selective in the figures I did first. So I did the James Joyce first, and I gave him a table to be next to, with an open book on it, presumably *Ulysses*. I may have etched "Ulysses" on it. And then I chose Fitzgerald, and Hemingway...but the point is [as] the thing evolved I kept changing my vision of the whole thing. I had no idea



that I could ever finish this project. I started it at the very end of 1969. I remember that because I finished *James Joyce and Table*, and hoped that I could go on from there, and I did. I had to throw people out of *Shakespeare and Company*, because it was getting [to be] too many people.

AC: The bookstore was too crowded! What about the other figures in *Shakespeare and Company*? How did you choose each of the images?

MD: Well, again, lots of photographs and lots of books. But I think Fitzgerald came next. And then came Hemingway, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, I don't know whether in that order or not. I had been reading about *Shakespeare and Company* [at the time]. Of course, Sylvia Beach became very famous because she was the only one that had the courage to publish *Ulysses*. I knew that when Sylvia got to Paris, she had been diverted [from] her original plan to open a bookstore in New York City. So in the course of going around, she met Adrienne Monnier who had the most famous French avant-garde book shop. It was a place where the French authors went to do readings, and they very often included André Gide and Paul Valéry. So I began to see it as a place where the American authors would meet and where the two women would have readings. So I decided to do Sylvia Beach standing up front, and Adrienne Monnier, [both] looking at the next person who was coming to the reading. So I put André Gide seated at a table, and Paul Valéry seated in a chair. I used a lot of photographs, and some of them are found in [the book] *Joyce in Paris*.

AC: Well, this is your most ambitious project. Did it take two years—or more?

MD: It took all of 1970, you know. The clays were done in '71, and then the early part of '72 I was busy casting these things, and planning where I would put them on this platform that I imagined.

AC: How did you decide to color the figures with patina? That was very unusual at the time.

MD: Ah, well, that happens from the beginning of my sculpture, when I found Joel Misnen's foundry, way out on Long Island. I wasn't the first, but I was among the first to come there. And here again we come back to the fact that because I didn't know what I was doing, I felt that I could do anything. And so I asked questions. I asked Joel, "is it possible to get color in acids?" He said, "yes, you can. Nobody's been using them for a long time." And I said, "well, I see my things as having color. How can we work that?" So he said, "You need shortcuts because you haven't been tutored. So why don't you leave it to the experts. You tell them what you want, and say 'stop! do that.'" Which is what I did. And I was able to get most of the effects that I wanted that way. They even stocked some tiny brushes for me, because I was hot to paint the eyebrows, and small objects.<sup>2</sup>

AC: So the different patinas and colors in the sculpture were really accomplished by telling the craftsmen how much or how little or when to stop?

MD: It began because I was foolish enough to ask questions about color.

AC: So after *Shakespeare and Company*, in the mid-'70s, you did a Sarah Caldwell, who doesn't fit your usual subject categories. How did you decide to make a sculpture of her?

MD: Sarah Caldwell was someone I might normally not have done because she's not a writer, not an artist in the sense of painting and sculpture. But I had a copy of that *Time* magazine, and there was a small photograph of Sarah Caldwell seated on some kind of stairs or something. And I thought, "my god! That looks so sculptable." And she is the only one I did that was away from my regular work. Also, the patina just fell into place. It had to be green. I wanted to make her look like a marble figure because of the way she was seated outside. And also [the foundry was] able to get for me a really wonderful green—I wanted to get an almost black green. I thought that the book that she was holding in her hands should have some mention of music, so I chose *Traviata*. I may even have read that she did a very good *Traviata* at some point.

AC: Let's talk about the Stieglitz group, the group of artists that you started sculpting in the '80s.

MD: I made the O'Keeffe, the Demuth and the Marin and the Dove, and the Hartley was the last. But I was thinking of them as a group. I had them all on a platform as a group. But then came the Hartley, and he threw the whole thing out of scale, because he was so imposing and so strong. When I met Hartley through Sarah Pierce, he was seated, almost like a strong, stone eagle. He had a very impressive look. And while the face didn't move at all, the eyes were very, very powerful. And so I thought I must do him but I made him a little too big for the group. And someone said to me recently, "why do they all have to be the same size? Why can't you have him a little bit away from the others in the group, rather than part of the whole thing?" So I began to think of it in that way.

AC: Well, he's a truly imposing figure. [The figures are all] small and intimate and at the same time they're monumental—they have a presence. The Georgia O'Keeffe also has some of the same coloration in the overcoat, and the hair combed back...

MD: I was on a black kick for a while, you know. That's why Marsden Hartley's hat is black and his coat is black, [as] you can see. But Georgia O'Keeffe, I suddenly realized that there was a severity in a great many of the photographs. And after awhile I think I did it deliberately. I had been told that she had lesbian tendencies, and I tried to make her more severe than I would with some of the softer photographs by Stieglitz. Anyhow, that's how she appeared to me, and she's exactly wearing this coat in the photographs that I used. And I kept the hair rather severely drawn back for that purpose. Arthur Dove, as an image, originally interested me less than the others. Then I noticed he was a very nautical man, and he would be around boats a lot. And I thought maybe I could catch that as being part of his life.

AC: It has a wonderful texture.

MD: I'm glad you mentioned that. I had begun to do [that] spontaneously with the Ezra Pound shawl. I had rasps—tools that had texture in them. I went down the whole shawl pressing the rasp into it, and pressing the texture

**into it. And I did that quite often during that period.**

AC: And then the Stieglitz portrait here is amongst the smallest figures. Historically, he was the center of the group. Is that why you chose to portray him sitting as he was at the gallery?

**MD: As he would be at the gallery. And also he had a kind of severity about him—the same as Georgia, you know? And I tried to make the colors fit in with some of the coloring of all the other sculptors, so I gave him a black coat. The one problem that presented itself was the eyeglasses, which are not made of bronze; they're wire. I made the eyeglasses separately with wire, and Joel had them soldered on. I like the look because it doesn't look as though I sculpted it; it looks like a pair of eyeglasses that he just put on.**

AC: Why did you choose the Stieglitz group? Why did you choose those particular six figures, when you had been doing writers up to this period?

**MD: Well, I was beginning to be interested in doing artists at that point.**

AC: Were you thinking of yourself as an artist when you first chose to sculpt artists?

**MD: Well, that could be an explanation, but I don't think I thought of it that way. It didn't occur to me at that time. As a group, they attracted me a great deal.**

AC: So you admired their work the way you had admired the writers' work?

**MD: Yes, and also I think the whole story of the Stieglitz group was so fascinating, how it evolved, you know, and how these people came together.**

AC: Tell us about the Virgil Thomson.

**MD: I had decided in my own head that I wanted to do a sculpture of Virgil, because he was a close friend. He was fond of ritual, you know. The ceremony of offering you a drink was so wonderful. He would come out—"and now..." he would say, "what about a drink?" And he would stand there with his hands to his side, like some sort of delinquent servant, I guess, and he was absolutely stiff in his gestures. But it made a wonderful image, him standing there offering me this drink, and his hands by his sides, and his eyes were twinkling all the time when he would talk. And you could see the humor in his face because he had tremendous humor. I think Virgil's one of the wittiest men I've ever met.**

AC: And what image did you use to sculpt him? Is he someone you had a photograph of?

**MD: No, I did that out of my head. That came completely out of my head.**

AC: He does have that same pose, the arms by his sides.

**MD:** I collected photographs. I did notice that I hit on a stance that he used frequently. And he would be almost motionless, except for the fact that his face was dancing. His features were always in motion. I have a story about Virgil Thomson and the sculpture. Virgil always protested that he never bought anything, that people always gave it to him. And I told this to John Button, and Johnny said to me, "that's nonsense! He paid for the painting he has by me." [Virgil] did something that was very atypical. He liked to be taken out to dinner, or he would like to cook you dinner at home—he was a good cook. But he called me one day and said, "what about having dinner with me one night?" This was so unusual I said, "Virgil, let me take you to dinner." And he said, "no, I said it first." And he suggested a restaurant called the Giraffe, which is in the East 50's, and I'd read a lot about it. It was very expensive. So I said, "maybe we could go..." and he said, "no, that's the one I want to go to." [That evening] he looked over on a table where I had the first Virgil Thomson [sculpture], and he said, "what's that?" And I said, "well, that's the third cast of that particular sculpture." And he said, "oh." He kept waiting for me to say, "I'll give it to you." And I didn't. I changed the subject each time he threw a hint at me. We went to dinner. We had a very good dinner, without Virgil getting the sculpture. It was clear what he was after [because] it was such atypical behavior. Well, a few days after this dinner, I got a telephone call from Helen Bishop, a friend of both Virgil and myself who loved my sculptures. She was in contact with David Nokes, the head of the Maison Française, who was spearheading Virgil's birthday celebration—maybe his 75th. Helen thought it would be a good idea to purchase the sculpture to give to him at the occasion, and asked my permission to suggest this to David, which I of course gave. So I had to get into a dark suit—I was invited to it. And there came a moment, at the end of the ceremonies, when David Nokes walked on the stage with my sculpture in his hands. And Virgil, who was always so bitchy, looked at the sculpture and said, "oh, no, no! I know that sculpture. I can't afford it. *Nobody* can afford to have that sculpture." So they had to follow him around the stage before he would take it. It was such a comedy going on in that auditorium. [They kept] following him, and then he finally took it.

AC: We didn't talk about the Evelyn Waugh. It stands out because of its beautiful texture, which is more pronounced than in most of the other pieces.

**MD:** Well, Evelyn Waugh was an easy choice because I think he's one of the greatest comic writers ever produced by anyone. One of the greatest writers, for that matter. And I love all his books. Marvelous reading. So he was a very clear choice for me. While I was doing him I realized that his personality in middle age had become quite flamboyant. He was quite nasty and quite testy. And he was clothed in some of the photographs just like the kind of thing an American would think an Englishman would wear.

AC: Looking the part. Waugh has more texture than most of the others, and it's one of the latter sculptures.

**MD:** I think because of this flamboyant quality that I wanted to have the clothes he was wearing reflect that. And I thought the best way to suggest that—the really vulgar checks—was to get one of my tools, a large rasp... that's

**how I wound up doing it. And for the patina, I thought that a yellow-gold would be exactly right for him.**

AC: I want to take you back to the question of influences. You talk a lot about artists you like (and whose work you have in your apartment), including Nadelman's sculpture, and watercolors by Charles Demuth and Max Beerbohm. In Beerbohm especially there is a perceptible essence of caricature, and in your work the sense of portraiture...

**MD: I never, never wanted to have any kind of caricatures. I wanted it to be a portrait with all those qualities in it. It was a big aspiration to try to get the work, the life, and the likeness all into one thing. And I don't know of anyone who has tried to do exactly that.**

**1** Verlaine and Rimbaud are seated at a table on which de Lisio composed a still life of a cup and saucer, bowl of fruit, and a pitcher, with Verlaine holding a goblet.

The composition is reminiscent of a School of Paris still life.

**2** De Lisio recalls being one of the first sculptors to work in the Long Island foundry owned by Lester Arnett, owner of an industrial tool company and avid art collector.

In the '60s, Arnett decided to devote a portion of the factory to the production of art, and hired Joel Misnen to oversee this part of the operation.

# Michael de Lisio

## One-man exhibitions:

- 1986** Zabriskie Gallery, New York, NY
- 1980** Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA  
Cosmopolitan Club, New York, NY
- 1978** Brooke Alexander Gallery, New York, NY
- 1976** Hurlbutt Gallery, Greenwich Library, Greenwich, CT
- 1974** Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA
- 1973** Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA  
Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ
- 1971** Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- 1970** Hanover Gallery, London
- 1969** Nova Scotia College of Art, Halifax

## Selected public collections:

- Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA
- Christ Church, Oxford, England
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC
- Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
- Museum of the City of New York, New York, NY
- Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ
- Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia, PA
- Silverado Museum, Vailima Foundation, St. Helena, CA
- Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA
- Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS



